

## CHP follows up on cluster of Candida auris carrier cases

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (July 29) following up a cluster of *Candida auris* carrier cases involving a total of six residents at a residential care home for the elderly (RCHE) in Kowloon City, and reminded members of the public about the proper use of antimicrobials and maintaining personal hygiene against infection.

The CHP received notification from the Hospital Authority that a 78-year-old male resident of the aforementioned RCHE, who was earlier admitted to Queen Elizabeth Hospital and had contact with a known carrier case at the hospital, was confirmed to have carried *Candida auris* upon testing a week later when he was already discharged back to RCHE, while another 96-year-old female resident of the RCHE was confirmed to have carried *Candida auris* upon admission screening.

Upon receiving the notification, the CHP conducted further epidemiological investigation at the RCHE and found that the two aforementioned residents had contacts during their stay in the RCHE. Also, contact screening revealed another four carrier cases involving four female residents aged between 89 and 100. One of them had contacts with the 78-year-old male resident, while the remaining three share room with the 96-year-old female resident mentioned above. The six of them, with underlying illnesses, have no symptoms of infection, and are in stable condition.

The CHP is continuing its investigation on the infection source of the cluster and a site inspection has been conducted. It is found that the first case (78-year-old male resident) was discharged without knowing the carrier status and the infection spread within the RCHE concerned before appropriate infection control measures have been implemented.

The CHP has provided infection control advice and training to staff of the RCHE. The RCHE is advised to follow the prevailing guidelines to enhance infection control measures including appropriate placement of carrier residents, strict implementation of contact precautions, enhancement of environmental cleansing and disinfection, use of dedicated medical equipment, toilet and bathing facilities to prevent the spread of *Candida auris*. The CHP will keep in close liaison with the RCHE concerned, monitor the situation of the residents and ensure the RCHE has carried out the various infection control measures.

A spokesman for the CHP explained that *Candida* is a fungus commonly found in the natural environment, particularly in moist and warm environments. In humans, it is commonly found in body sites such as the oral cavity, the digestive tract, the skin and the vagina. It is a common fungus living on or in the human body but can occasionally cause infections, especially in individuals with impaired immunity.

â€œâ€œAmong the different candida species, Candida auris is more drug-resistant. Infections vary from being mild to potentially life-threatening or fatal, depending on which part of the body is affected and the general health condition of the patient. The spokesman stressed that proper use of antimicrobials and maintaining personal hygiene, especially hand hygiene, are crucial to the prevention of the emergence and cross-transmission of Candida auris.